

Bard

Bard College
Bard Digital Commons

Robert Kelly Manuscripts

Robert Kelly Archive

2-2012

febF2012

Robert Kelly
Bard College

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "febF2012" (2012). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 337.
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/337

This Manuscript is brought to you for free and open access by the Robert Kelly Archive at Bard Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Robert Kelly Manuscripts by an authorized administrator of Bard Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@bard.edu.

Bard

= = = = =

A muscular star
left in the margin

a nun has been here
pale inside her black robes

you can never tell
how young anybody really is

I hear a crow calling
to tell me I'm right not to know.

19 February 2012

= = = = =

What did I first think the sky was
with all its stars and yellow pilgrims?

What do I think it is now?
Important to try to recover what you thought

thought things were
before people told you what they really are.

What did you think death was
before anybody died?

And where were you before you were born?
Try to taste in your mouth what you once almost knew.

19 February 2012

= = = = =

Pain too gets tired of sitting there
roams around in the body
reminds me of towns where I used to live
so far from anywhere the rents are cheap
and all the landlords are in prison
or back in Poland getting Social Security
in the old days you could live on a dime
but now things have names and faces
You pay taxes. You forget what rain feels like.

19 February 2012

FIVE WEEKS TILL SPRING

blackbirds here already
and crocuses in Boston

we leave stains on one another
not scars, stains

wash them off with coffee
or wine, or time.

19 February 2012

= = = = =

In the everybody-sees-me window
less pain and more birds
you put up with traffic—

things go past the least of your wounds
the symmetry of spruce trees
balances the morning light

breakfast time but nobody to eat it
things in the larder wait their turn
like pain in a sleeping invalid.

19 February 2012

= = = = =

And one day we'll get it right—
when the child goes to sleep
it sleeps deep inside its mother's eyes.

19 February 2012

= = = = =

Let me do what I see myself doing in dream
white thigh hypotenuse
contracts spread out on long table
now that blueprints are white too

something this big has to be about money
(space race makes jobs for geeks)
it's all like every dream a conspiracy.
People I meet there are boring as me.

20 February 2012

= = = = =

Parasol in winter
press the button
we belong to one another
excuse my dream

wishing is a childhood ailment
that leaves pale scars.
Want nothing. Just do.
When you connect the dots

you'll see a picture of your
father's face laughing at you.

20 February 2012

= = = = =

Remember when you loved a broken mirror
remember when the woods were full of crocodiles
everybody else could see but you
remember when the feel of your hand
was a promissory note from God

remember when you made a vow to the blue sky
and keep it still, remember
how the silence's vocabulary
left traces in you that you tried to write down?

20 February 2012

A CORRAL

and you have no horses
so you feel at ease
inside all these fences

girl comes out of cookhouse
tells you this is not a movie
so get your clothes back on—

there are no enemies
what you took for shadows
are really shadows. But
everything else is wrong.

20 February 2012

= = = = =

Pile in a lot of daytime things
and call it a poem.
Or a car going somewhere predictable—
hospital, cemetery, school.
Even I admit it. Sometimes
comforting to think of frying pans
or pound on one with a big steel spoon.

20 February 2012

= = = =

“Ask more of me than this”

I wrote and didn’t know

if it was time or places or words

or meat I meant,

giving money to a friend

reading a strange uneasy book all the way to the end.

20 February 2012

= = = = =

Small small small
as the rung of a ladder
under a broad foot

balance is all,
this mute reciprocal.

20 February 2012

= = = = =

Try to carry it there
try to make it go there by itself

indistinct
in troubled dreams
a leader's wife who did not love him much

these all-night narratives
there are no causes
I don't want stories I want this

this moment, the thing
they call a flower
and love it because it withers

three dimensions too many
or two few

the point is heaven
or the point is hell

a massless memory
a girl at the side of a road.

*

Trees laugh at our brevity
knowing we are anxious on this earth

uneasy boarders
afraid to stay too long

a nervous planet
full of exit ramps

trees are content to move
only through time

it takes no time to see
it takes forever to discover

as if these are the last
things I had to say

when from the great churn of ocean east
another buttery sun is coaxed to come

phrase after phrase
without a narrative

no time at all to see
no narrator, res ipsa

the thing speaks for itself
to repair the balance of the air

*

my mother was a seal
yours a salamander

hydrangea gardenia
it is too easy to be continuous

die and be born
again every line

paradise never lost
never gambled away

inhale the obvious
a plowed field waits to yield

*

cars collect sunshine
yes I've noticed

opera where the words get lost
alas the words were words enough for me
trying to write my say out of despond

the sound of wood

carpenters: ancient Celtic word
the men who built the chariots of wood
build my screen door

ever faithful lodge of craft
woodmen of the world
Totem of the Eagle TOTE

my father's lodge

how little all that lasted
he said it meant Too Old To Eat
and now I am

*

death abrogates no vows it's said

carrying his virtues on his back
bent to the ground beneath good deeds

smoking chimney
dog outside the barracks howling

my legs are warm I must be going

I'm doing this for you
please stand under

what he thought about the city

did it make the streets cleaner
did he loves his neighbors more

that's what matters

that is where I fail
I am no neighbor

I live over a small café
on the far side of the moon

but of course there are rabbits in my garden

no narrative
a blind plowman trusts his ox

I closed my eyes and followed

the thought of her up the hill
surefooted, with dream power

a dream never makes mistakes

*

This was chivalry
this is what horses teach men
hurry forward
eat what you find along the way
sleep standing up

We spoiled it all with lances and swords

Or there was only one story
but it never yet got told

*

To raise a flag
that no one sees

transparent banner
woven of air

stateless citizens

in one another's hands

a dream book left from Babylon

a brick falling out of the sky

*

Sit down before the light

as servitor

I am the footman of windows

the blacksmith of doors

I shoe the light so it can race

all through the house at once

and get to the end before I do

the furthest star

your head on the midnight pillow

*

It is the hour when color fades away

and the lineaments of the beheld

turn tricky, a sneaky czardas

danced by the trees, is it you
or you, a deer or the hill?
Glacial scour shale abandonment
fingernail gouge soft cliffs of Oregon

or brush against your roseward cheek
as if I were the air
around you—you know this
don't you, you move through me
are realer than me (if any
of us are real) and I elapse
(is that the word) confronted by
your sheer undeliberate identity

a stone left over from last glacier
a brand-new bird lands right on it
a woodpecker say—so
which one is me?

21 February 2012

= = = = =

So there is something to be said--
an article in front of a noun
makes the noun special, puts it
in your hands. Your hands
used to work magic on me
just by thinking about them.
As the long line of your spine
leads to the orchard and there

we try to understand ourselves
touch by touch but doing
nothing about it. No crisis
in knowing you. No destiny
unlocked. Being near
is history enough. The shine
of what any person is

sometimes is more. Is you
for instance in the forest
somewhere south of anywhere.
I have never been there
except being with you, and with
doesn't mean much with all
the distance between us. But it does.

21 February 2012